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## Family of passengers killed in high speed chase files lawsuit against Hernando and police department

By Mark Randall  
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The family of two passengers who were killed in a motor vehicle crash following a police chase involving Hernando Police, have filed a multi-million wrongful death lawsuit against the city and Chief Scott Worsham.

Exhibit "B"

The lawsuit was filed Thursday in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Mississippi by Linda White, mother of Jesse White, and Kathryn Bonds, mother of Kristopher Ford. The lawsuit alleges they were innocent bystanders who were not suspected of any crimes at the time of the pursuit, and that actions of the officer led directly to their deaths.

The incident occurred during the early morning hours of July 27, 2019, when Officer Alec Chatham spotted a maroon Nissan Maxima traveling southbound on Highway 51 just south of Commerce Street, and attempted to pull it over. The vehicle initially stopped, then sped away, which led to a high-speed pursuit at speeds exceeding 100 miles an hour. Police were unaware of any passengers in the vehicle.

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Officer Chatham maintained radio contact with Hernando Police Department during the pursuit, but was later instructed by a supervisor to call it off.



According to the lawsuit, Officer Lynn Brown spotted the vehicle and continued the pursuit, despite having no additional information about the driver, other than the vehicle potentially had incorrect tags and was driving in an unsafe manner.

The Nissan entered the wrong lane on I-55 in an attempt to evade chase and flipped over, killing Bonds and Ford.

The lawsuit states that Brown was not justified in his pursuit, and that their deaths could have been avoided. The complaint further alleges that Hernando Police Department has either intentionally or willfully permitted, encouraged, or tolerated a pattern of not enforcing department policies and practices.

Brown was cleared of any wrongdoing by an internal investigation and was never disciplined, reprimanded or terminated.

The lawsuit also claims that the police department routinely fails to adequately investigate and document complaints against its officers, and that Worsham has allowed it to continue and denies any problems exist in the department.

Memphis attorney Martin Zummach, who filed the lawsuit, had no addition comment about the merits of the lawsuit.

"We won't be commenting on active litigation unless Hernando chooses to ," Zummach said.

Hernando Mayor Chip Johnson said the city will defend itself, but also had no comment about the case.

"I would like to tell the city's side, but this is something that we will address and leave to the courts," Johnson said. "But my job is to protect the taxpayers of Hernando, and the best way I can do that is to let the attorneys handle that."

The lawsuit seeks \$3 million in actual and compensatory damages, \$12 million in punitive damages, and funeral and burial expenses.

